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ABSTRACT

The 1998 General Assembly directed the Council of Higher Education to study policies regarding the use of adjunct faculty at Virginia's colleges and universities. The study aimed to examine course loads and benefits and how these issues relate to faculty with joint appointments at several public institutions. Virginia's public higher education institutions employ 2,450 full-time equivalent adjunct faculty, which is equal to 19% of the total faculty. Adjunct faculty are employed most commonly in the community colleges, where they comprise 43% of the total faculty, and in specific disciplines, including law, fine arts, English and literature, computer sciences, and mathematics and statistics. Adjunct faculty are not eligible for tenure and are usually ineligible for major benefits. While the overall picture of adjunct faculty is positive, there are examples of low morale and perceived exploitation, particularly among adjunct faculty seeking full-time work. Based on the information in this study, five recommendations are made: (1) written policies for adjunct faculty should be established at all institutions; (2) adjunct faculty should receive common institutional benefits, including computing services and library access; (3) adjunct faculty should be compensated according to their qualifications and market demands; (4) institutional use of adjunct faculty should be better documented; and (5) institutions should track adjunct faculty employment at other institutions. Tables include percentages of part-time faculty and their salaries by institution. (JJL)

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Response to Item 156.H., Chapter 1, Special Session 1, 1998

State Council of Higher Education for Virginia
November 17, 1998

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Study of Policies Regarding the Use of Adjunct Faculty

Introduction

The 1998 General Assembly directed the Council of Higher Education, in conjunction with the Department of Personnel and Training and the Department of Planning and Budget, "to study policies regarding the use of adjunct faculty at Virginia's public colleges and universities. The study shall examine course loads, benefits, and how these issues relate to faculty who have joint appointments with more than one public institution." (Item 156, Chapter 1, Special Session 1, 1998. The full citation is shown in the appendix.) The study originated, in part, out of a concern that an adjunct faculty member could have appointments with more than one institution and teach a full course load yet not have the salary and benefits of full-time faculty members.

Historically, adjunct faculty have been used in targeted ways to capture special skills in academic programs. In the last 25 years, however, the proportion of adjunct to total faculty has doubled, to more than 40 percent today. Scholars point to at least two factors in the growth in the number of adjunct faculty: the expansion of community colleges, which employ large numbers of adjunct faculty, and financial pressures that resulted in institutions hiring fewer full-time, tenure track faculty. As a result of these changes, new ways to define adjunct faculty have emerged (Leslie). For the purposes of this study, the term "adjunct" refers to individuals appointed to teach credit-bearing courses during the academic year (not summer) and whose employment is on some basis other than a full-time contract. Sometimes referred to as "part-time" faculty, this group also includes temporary hires, paid and unpaid, who teach as substitutes, as "fill-in" appointments, or as on-call instructors whose employment depends on adequate enrollment in courses. It does not refer to graduate teaching assistants, faculty appointed to full-time positions without eligibility for tenure, faculty appointed on specific-length contracts, or faculty who are hired on research or sponsored-program grants with no teaching responsibilities.

In preparing this study, the Council staff met with two experts on the use of adjunct faculty, Dr. David W. Leslie from the College of William and Mary, and Dr. Howard P. Tuckman, from Virginia Commonwealth University. Council staff discussed with them the relevant issues and the kinds of data that could contribute to an understanding of the issue. The Council staff also met with representatives from the Department of Planning and Budget, the Department of Personnel and Training, and the Department of Accounts and spoke with representatives from the Senate Finance Committee and the House Appropriations Committee about ways to pursue this study.

One difficulty that immediately became apparent is that data on adjunct faculty are not available centrally (most college and university payroll systems are administered locally) and that the institutions may define adjunct faculty

inconsistently or in a way that does not recognize differences within the category of "adjunct." (For example, one institution may count visiting faculty on full or partial leaves from other institutions as adjuncts. Another institution may include senior graduate students who teach part-time. Still another institution may count full-time faculty who teach more than the normal course assignments as adjuncts.) Given the difficulties of gathering useful data, the Council staff approached the issue of adjunct faculty by reviewing existing state and institutional policies and procedures, surveying the institutions on actual practices, and interviewing adjunct faculty who have appointments with more than one public institution.

Profile of Adjunct Faculty

Virginia's public institutions of higher education employ approximately 2,450 full-time equivalent adjunct faculty, or about 19 percent of the total faculty. The actual number of individuals who taught part-time is considerably higher, about 8,100, or about 43 percent. The "full-time equivalent" figure takes into account the fact that adjunct faculty usually teach only one or two courses. It is the most accurate way to compare adjunct to full-time faculty effort.

Broadly defined, an adjunct faculty member is one who is appointed for a specified and limited term to teach one or more academic courses or to provide other stipulated academic responsibilities. A rank and discipline generally are assigned as appropriate to the appointee's academic qualifications, but the title often is modified to differentiate such appointments from those of full-time faculty. Unlike full-time faculty, adjunct faculty generally do not serve on committees, participate in faculty governance, attend professional conferences, publish in scholarly journals, or engage in departmental or sponsored research.

Adjunct faculty are employed most commonly in the community colleges., which employ approximately 1,422 full-time equivalent adjunct faculty, or 43 percent of the total faculty. Among four-year institutions, adjunct faculty are more often found at institutions located in urban and suburban areas of the state, such as George Mason University, Old Dominion University, and Virginia Commonwealth University. (See Table 1.) They also tend to be concentrated in specific academic disciplines, including law, fine arts, English and literature, computer sciences, and mathematics and statistics (Leslie).

While increasingly used to provide flexibility and to meet budget needs, adjunct faculty continue to be used to capture special skills in academic programs. Adjunct faculty are a diverse group and can range from senior graduate students to distinguished private practice professionals in such programs as architecture, business, and law who provide an element of curriculum enrichment. Approximately 27 percent of adjunct faculty nationally hold a doctoral or first-professional degree, compared to 65 percent for full-time faculty. Nationwide, 64 percent hold full-time jobs elsewhere while teaching part-

time. In a national study, the majority of part-time and adjunct faculty (52 percent) reported that they "prefer" part-time teaching, while 45 percent reported that they were teaching part-time because full-time jobs were not available (Leslie).

While no comprehensive data exist, anecdotal evidence suggests that a small percentage of adjunct faculty in Virginia (estimated at less than 5 percent) teach simultaneously at more than one institution. It is possible that some of these adjunct faculty, through the combination of appointments, teach a full-time load in any given academic term, although they would not be expected to engage in research and service activities commonly associated with full-time faculty. Such multiple appointments occur most commonly between two-year and four-year institutions.

The number of courses adjunct faculty teach varies according to institutional and departmental needs and according to the terms of the contracts institutions sign with the appointee. According to information gathered from the chief academic officers at the public institutions, most adjunct faculty teach one or two courses, although there may be exceptional cases whereby someone would carry a greater course load. At Northern Virginia Community College, for example, over 50 percent of the adjunct faculty taught four or fewer credit hours in the fall of 1997. About 1 percent of the adjuncts taught 15 credits or more.

Compensation for adjunct faculty is generally provided according to the number of credit hours or courses taught. Pay often is determined at a departmental level and can be influenced by factors such as class size, academic qualifications of the appointee, and market demands for a particular academic discipline. Unlike controls on average faculty salaries for full-time faculty, institutions have no state guidelines for adjunct faculty compensation and can use their appropriations to best meet their changing needs. Salary increases for adjunct faculty are part of the General Assembly's overall appropriation deliberations, but the amounts specifically used by institutions for adjunct faculty are determined by the institutions and are dependent on institutional budget priorities and local market forces. A listing of adjunct faculty compensation for Fall 1997 is shown on Table 2.

As noted above, institutions use adjunct faculty to capture unique skills that may exist in the community from those in non-teaching professional occupations, such as law and business. In more recent years, however, there has been greater reliance on adjunct faculty across the disciplines, as institutions hired fewer full-time, tenure track faculty. National research has suggested that increasing enrollment without a commensurate rise in institutional revenue was an important factor in reallocating faculty positions from full-time to part-time (Leslie). According to Leslie, "[t]hese conditions made it harder to hire more full-time faculty, given the lower salaries paid to part-timers, the shorter time commitment to them, and the fact that part-timers mostly need not be paid

benefits." The evidence in Virginia is not so conclusive, particularly for the four-year institutions. Between 1990 and 1996, adjunct faculty employment increased 7 percent, while full-time faculty employment increased 10 percent. The community colleges increased adjunct faculty by 17 percent, vs. 7 percent for full-time faculty.

State and Institutional Policies and Practices Regarding Adjunct Faculty

Adjunct faculty are not eligible for tenure and they are usually ineligible for major benefits applicable to full-time positions, such as retirement, medical and insurance benefits, and research leaves. Within the state system of employment, adjunct faculty are treated no differently from other state part-time employees in regards to benefits.

Most, but not all, institutions have written policies regarding the employment of adjunct faculty. These policies most often are found in faculty handbooks. They capture items such as assignment of duties, rights and privileges, evaluation, and, to the extent appropriate, a description of benefits. Where benefits exist, they tend to be those that are common to other university employees, such as tuition waivers, discounts at the university bookstore, access to the library and computing services, and use of athletic and physical education facilities. Some institutions have established permanent, recurring part-time faculty positions, although these tend to be exceptions that do not fit the mold of the typical adjunct position. Faculty filling these positions may be eligible for additional benefits, such as a base salary supplement that can be used for a retirement savings program or access to a disability leave program. No Virginia policy provides benefits to an adjunct appointee who teaches at more than one public institution.

Academic and Fiscal Stress

As noted previously, adjunct faculty often are used to provide for specific, defined projects and to augment the strength or expertise of the full-time faculty. They often hold full-time jobs, although some are underemployed and work part-time only because full-time academic positions do not exist. Because they are employed for different purposes and the appointees have different attitudes regarding their adjunct status, the academic implications of the increasing reliance on adjunct faculty can be murky. In national studies, researchers using common evaluation and assessment tools have found essentially no difference in the quality of teaching between part-time and full-time faculty and that part-time faculty are as engaged in and satisfied with their professional commitment as full-time faculty (Leslie).

But while the overall picture of adjunct faculty is one of good health, there are examples of low morale and perceived exploitation, most often among adjunct faculty who are seeking, but cannot find, full-time work. National

research shows that this group of adjunct faculty -- some of whom may seek work at multiple institutions -- tend to be in the fine arts and humanities. Almost one-third of the adjuncts in the humanities and 27 percent of those in fine arts reported overall dissatisfaction with their jobs -- much higher than the levels of dissatisfaction among adjuncts in all fields (Leslie). In general, it appears that more people are seeking academic work in the humanities than there are full-time jobs available, resulting in lower wages and relatively more part-time positions.

Meanwhile, the pressures that have led to the increasing use of adjunct faculty -- public concern about cost and resource restrictions -- show no sign of abating. The challenge facing institutions and the state is to balance the dual goals of controlling costs and maintaining quality.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Historically, adjunct faculty have been used to capture special skills in academic programs. In the last 25 years, however, American higher education has seen a significant increase in the number of adjunct faculty and the ways in which they are employed. Employment of adjunct faculty often becomes one way in which institutions minimize costs without sacrificing quality, although over reliance on adjunct faculty has the potential to jeopardize quality. Adjunct faculty also provide flexibility in shifting resources to accommodate shifting student enrollments in various courses and majors.

The use of adjunct faculty varies by institution type, academic discipline, and regional labor market. Pay and work expectations depend on institutional and departmental policies (some of which are written in faculty handbooks or elsewhere), institutional resources, and local market forces. Part-time faculty -- like part-time employees statewide -- are ineligible for standard state benefits, such as health insurance and retirement contributions, although at some institutions they are eligible for tuition waivers and access to libraries, computer services, and athletic facilities. No state or institutional policies -- and only anecdotal evidence -- exist regarding faculty who hold adjunct appointments at more than one public institution.

Based on the information in this study, institutions and the Council should undertake are the following efforts:

1. Institutions should establish written policies for adjunct faculty that include assignment of duties, rights and privileges, evaluation, and, as appropriate, a description of benefits. For those institutions with a significant presence of adjunct faculty, these policies should be part of a separate publication designed specifically for adjunct faculty.

2. Institutions should extend to adjunct faculty common institutional benefits, such as access to libraries, computing services, and athletic facilities.
3. Institutions should retain the flexibility to use appropriated funds to remunerate adjunct faculty according to workload expectations, faculty qualifications, market demands, and other factors.
4. The Council should explore the possibility of documenting more fully institutional use of adjunct faculty, both in how they are categorized and how they are used in the classroom. The Council should do this recognizing the cost and administrative burden such a collection may place on institutions and the Council.
5. The Council should pursue with the institutions the possibility of collecting information from adjunct faculty about employment at other state and/or private institutions to allow analysis of "full-time" workload. The Council should do this with the understanding that adjunct faculty usually do not carry the burden of institutional service and research normally associated with full-time status.

Sources:

"Two Faculties or One? The Conundrum of Part-Timers in a Bifurcated Work Force," Judith M. Gappa and David W. Leslie, American Association for Higher Education, March 1996.

"Part-Time, Adjunct, and Temporary Faculty: The New Majority," David W. Leslie, the Sloan Conference on Part-time and Adjunct Faculty, May 1998.

"Statement from the Conference on the Growing Use of Part-Time and Adjunct Faculty," American Association of University Professors, September 1997.

"Instructional Faculty and Staff in Higher Education Institutions: Fall 1987 and Fall 1992," National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, September 1997.

"Fall Staff in Postsecondary Institutions, 1995," National Center for Education Statistics, U. S. Department of Education, March 1998.

"Growing Use of Part-Time Professors Prompts Debate and Calls for Action," Courtney Leatherman, The Chronicle of Higher Education, October 10, 1997.

"The Economic Imperatives of Using More Full-Time and Fewer Adjunct Professors," Pierre A. Walker, The Chronicle of Higher Education, May 29, 1998.

"For Some Adjunct Faculty Members, the Tenure Track Holds Little Appeal," Robin Wilson, The Chronicle of Higher Education, July 24, 1998.

Faculty handbooks and other source documents from institutions.

Table 1
Percentage of Part-time Faculty, Fall 1996

Institution	Part-time	Full-time	Total	% Part-time	FTE Part-time	FTE Full-time	FTE Total	FTE % Part-time
CWM	121	575	696	17%	32	566	598	5%
GMU	544	769	1,313	41%	176	760	936	19%
ODU	352	623	975	36%	110	623	733	15%
UVA	300	1,795	2,095	14%	114	1,795	1,909	6%
VCU	1,050	1,434	2,484	42%	237	1,434	1,671	14%
VPI	235	1,410	1,645	14%	58	1,410	1,468	4%
CNU	142	166	308	46%	21	166	187	11%
CVC	45	59	104	43%	11	59	70	16%
JMU	207	559	766	27%	79	559	638	12%
LC	59	158	217	27%	28	158	186	15%
MWC	71	175	246	29%	18	175	193	9%
NSU	204	402	606	34%	67	402	469	14%
RU	144	361	505	29%	35	361	396	9%
VMI	22	101	123	18%	9	101	110	8%
VSU	96	192	288	33%	32	192	224	14%
Total, 4-Year	3,592	8,779	12,371	29%	1,027	8,761	9,788	10%
RBC	25	34	59	42%	3	34	37	8%
VCCS	4,464	1,922	6,386	70%	1,422	1,922	3,344	43%
Total, All	8,081	10,735	18,816	43%	2,452	10,717	13,169	19%

Sources: SCHEV "Indicators of Institutional Mission, No. 4, Who are the faculty?" 1997, and institutional records.

Table 2
Adjunct Compensation, Fall 1997

Institution	Formula Used	Salary
Christopher Newport	Per credit hour Based on rank and experience	$475/credit hour to $600/credit hour
Clinch Valley	per credit hour based on rank	$600/credit hour to $700/credit hour
William and Mary	based on school and experience Education faculty also based on highest degree earned	A&S: $1000/credit hour Business: $3,000/course new adjuncts, $3,500/course continuing adjuncts Education: $800/credit hour to $866/credit hour Law: $600/credit hour to $1,667/credit hour
George Mason	per didactic hour* (for lab and studio: 3 contact hrs=2 didactic hours) based on experience and level of instruction	from $580/dh for qualified/experienced instructor teaching lower level course to $915/dh for exceptionally qualified/experienced teaching graduate level course
James Madison	minimum per 3 credit hour course	minimum: $1,840 per 3 credit hour course may be reduced if fewer than minimum # students enrolled in course actual pay based on department, class size, qualifications, demand, and available $
Longwood	per credit hour does not depend on rank/experience	$550/credit hour
Mary Washington	per credit hour based on experience and highest degree earned	$600/credit hour to $690/credit hour travel reimbursement: 10 cents/mile for non-local travel (beyond 20 miles)
Norfolk State	per contact hour three hour class carries 4-6 contact hours based on rank	$17/contact hour for instructors to $25/contact hour for professors per semester for three hour class: $1,020 for instructor carrying 4 contact hours to $2,250 for professor carrying 6 contact hours
Old Dominion	per credit hour based on rank- may be supplemented by discipline	$570/credit hour to $690/credit hour
Radford	per course based on academic department	$2,500 to $3,200 per three-hour course median payment approximately $2600
U. of Virginia	per credit hour based on discipline, experience, highest degree earned	Average: $1,333.33/credit hour
Va. Commonwealth	per credit hour based on level of instruction (undergrad vs. grad) faculty emeriti designation for some adjuncts	undergraduate: $690/credit hour graduate: $760/credit hour faculty emeriti: $914/credit hour
Va. Military Institute	per credit hour by academic discipline	$1,000/credit hour for History and Modern Languages to $1496/credit hour for Computer Science
Virginia Tech	per course based on college and discipline	$2,500/three hour course to $5,000/three hour course English and Humanities at low end -- Engineering and Computer Science at high end
Virginia State	per credit hour based on rank	$650/credit hour to $800/credit hour
Richard Bland	per credit hour	$535 per credit hour
VCCS	per credit hour based on rank NVCC has separate pay schedule	VCCS system: $402/credit hour to $827/credit hour NVCC: $433/credit hour to $894/credit hour

Appendix
Selected Language from Item 156, Chapter 1, Special Session 1, 1998

H. The State Council of Higher Education, in conjunction with the Department of Personnel and Training and the Department of Planning and Budget, is directed to study policies regarding the use of adjunct faculty at Virginia's public colleges and universities. The study shall examine course loads, benefits, and how these issues relate to faculty who have joint appointments with more than one public institution. The Council shall report its findings and recommendations regarding policies for the use of adjunct faculty to the chairmen of the Senate Finance Committee and House Appropriations Committee by October 15, 1998.